

**CORNELIUS, BY THE GRACE OF GOD AND FAVOR OF
THE APOSTOLIC SEE, ARCHBISHOP OF HALIFAX.**

**To the Clergy and Laity of the Diocese; Health and
Benediction in the Lord.**

DEARLY BELOVED :

Among all the facts of history of which we have any knowledge, that which has had the most beneficial and far-reaching effect on human society and its individual members, is, assuredly, the life work of Jesus Christ. His teachings and example have been for nineteen centuries a great moral force, curbing the untamed fury of despots, softening the rude temper of the barbarian, and uplifting the lowly and the oppressed. In proportion to the prevalence of that force in the laws and customs of a nation, will be the measure of the social well-being of the people. Where this force does not exist, there barbarism, oppression, and brutal injustice abound. The world, in its various geographical divisions, supplies an object lesson, the significance of which cannot be gainsaid. Where the masses of the people are influenced by the example and teachings of Jesus Christ, holiness of life and the highest form of civilization will obtain, even though the government may be one of oppression and injustice. In a word, there is no justice, nor sanctity, nor true civilization in the mind and heart of any man, except inasmuch as his life is moulded, consciously or unconsciously, by

that moral force which had its beginning nineteen hundred years ago, when Jesus taught in Peter's boat, or on the mountain slopes.

Who and whence was He whose influence on the destiny of mankind is indisputable, whose teachings are the only charter of human liberty, and the one guarantee of domestic and social happiness? No effect can be greater than its cause. But like causes can produce like effects. Hence, were Jesus Christ merely a man, some other man, indeed many men of the innumerable millions who have existed, could have written their names as largely and as enduringly on the records of time as He, yet we shall look in vain among the children of men for any such one. Happily the genealogy and birth of Christ are not shrouded in the dimness of pre-historic ages; by no perverse ingenuity can He be classed with the myths and poetic creations of Grecian bard, or Asiatic dreamers. Taken as a mere fact of history, His personality and actions are as well authenticated as the battle of Waterloo. When He was born "In Bethlehem of Juda, in the days of King Herod, behold there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying: Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and we are come to adore Him." (Matt. ii, 1-2.) Herod was troubled, and all Jerusalem excited. The chief priests and the learned scribes were hastily summoned. Herod's enquiry of them where the Christ should be born, puts beyond cavil, or contradiction, the belief of the Jewish nation in the coming of a divinely promised Ruler, equally as much as their answer, based as it was on the words of the prophet: "And thou, Bethlehem, the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come forth the Ruler, who shall rule my people Israel." The

wise men went their way, and soon found and adored the new-born King.

The history of the world, whilst it tells of many powerful kings, and relates their deeds of valour, or glory, affords no parallel to the circumstances surrounding and accompanying the birth of Jesus Christ, who was born "King of the Jews." His mother was a Virgin whom an Angel sent from God had saluted as "full of Grace," declaring that "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee; and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." (Luke i, 35.) The coming of the wise men to adore the new born King is in keeping with, and a corroboration of the divine manner of his conception. So, too, is the testimony of the Baptist, that fearless rebuker of an incestuous tyrant, when he said:—"There cometh after me one mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and loose." (Mark i, 7.) But that no room may be left to doubt the full meaning of these facts and testimonies, the fourth Gospel explicitly lays down that: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, * * and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us: and we saw his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John i, 1 and 14.) The coming of the Angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary, his solemn assurance as to the manner in which she should conceive and bring forth a Son, the journey to Jerusalem of the Eastern Kings, led by a star until they had found the infant, and the response of the Chief Priests and Scribes to Herod's enquiry, all find their explanation in the Gospel of St. John. God the Son, the deliverer for whom all Israel sighed, and whom the

nations awaited, assumed a human body and soul, to live for a time in the midst of his creatures,—as man to bear their weakness and infirmities, and as God to atone for the transgression of Adam, and to teach a more perfect Gospel of love and duty.

The words and actions of Christ are in keeping with the wonders that preceded and accompanied his birth. He taught with the calm assurance of infallible knowledge and Almighty power. He had no vague theories of duty and morality, nor did he leave to man any option in the service he claimed. There is no ambiguity in his Sermon on the Mount. He is not giving expression to views, or opinions which may be controverted; he is propounding principles which, if acted upon by the world, would leave no vexed social problems to be solved, and no human misery without its assuagement. We realize that it is a master who is speaking, and are not surprised when the Evangelist adds: "And it came to pass, when Jesus had fully ended these words, the people were in admiration of his doctrine. For he was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their Scribes and Pharisees." (Matt. viii, 28, 29.) He proved His authority by innumerable miracles, so striking in themselves, as the healing of lepers, the restoration of sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, and life to one four days dead, and wrought before so many witnesses that even his enemies admitted them, that no man who wishes to use his intelligence honestly can doubt he was what he claimed to be, viz., the Son of God, equal to the Father in all things. "Philip, he that seeth me seeth the Father also. How sayest thou, show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?" (John xiv, 9, 10.)

That Christ was God as well as man is the basis of the Christian Religion, the one warrant of our belief in its saving teachings, and the assurance of our hopes and aspirations for the hereafter. This foundation of the Christian system is the only explanation of the triumphs of the Cross over the souls and intellects of the most learned of our kind, or of its victories over the heritage of accumulated passions in the bone and blood of pagan races. It is, also, the source of authority, the bond of union, and the guarantee of the perpetuity of Christianity. Viewed as a fact in the history of mankind, the Religion of Christ which has given us all that we most prize of social liberty and humanizing civilization, proves the Divinity of its founder, and, as a consequence, our obligation of hearkening to his voice. It is to the will of our God, and not to the devices of men, we are called upon to submit in professing Christianity. The consoling truth that God is our teacher should render our hearts docile, and incline our will to a joyful acceptance of His words, even though difficulties should be encountered, and worldly disadvantages should have to be borne. Since Christ is God we cannot hope to reign in glory, unless we shall have first served in the lowly spirit of the Cross.

We cannot sound the depths of Christ's love for us, nor comprehend His tender pity for our immortal souls. Nowhere, perhaps, does He reveal these qualities so fully as in the touching discourse after the Last Supper. With patient iteration, and loving anxiety, He seeks to impress on the minds of His Apostles the great and saving truths which they are to preach for the salvation of the world, promising over and over again to send them the Spirit of Truth, "to teach them all things, and to bring all things to their mind." In various ways He reminds them that

it is only by an observance of what He has commanded that they can glorify Him, and remain in His love. Then as the hour was approaching in which was to begin the agony of His Passion, He broke forth into that solemn prayer for the sanctification of the souls that already believed in Him, as well as for that of those who should be brought to the truth through them. "Sanctify them in truth, Thy word is truth," was his prayer for his faithful ones ; and then He added—"And not for them only do I pray, but for those also who through their word shall believe in Me." (John xvii, 17. 20.) He prayed, moreover, that all who should believe in Him might offer to the world, by reason of their unity, a convincing proof of His Divinity. As in the physical order unity of purpose, and harmony of design, reveal the handiwork of a God, so in the spiritual and intellectual, a oneness of Faith and Charity in the Christian body, is the outward sign that denotes the indwelling of the Spirit of Truth. On the other hand, disunion is always the outcome of error, and of a lack of authority. Now Christ wished unity, the seal of eternal truth, to be the distinguishing mark of His followers. Hence he prayed "That they all may be one ; as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us ; that the world may believe that thou hast sent Me." (21.) Yet more He prayed—"That they may be one, as We also are one ; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one." (23.)

The Christian heart that listens in the silence of its own soul to this pathetic and impassioned prayer of the Redeemer of mankind, and humbly strives to know its meaning, will assuredly realize that the Spirit of Christ does not guide and rule a disunited body. He who pronounced that prayer can have had

no part, or share, in dissensions and divisions. He had glorified the Father upon the earth, and had "finished the work" which had been given him to do (4); that is, He had established His Church, through which others were to be brought to the truth, and to be one in Faith and Practice. His "finished work" could not be improved upon; anyone building outside its foundations, built on the sand; and all who gathered not with Him, scattered. His prayer could not fail of its effect; individuals, indeed, might fall away, but the organization once perfected by Him must endure till the end of time, and give testimony to his adorable Divinity by its wonderful unity of Faith in diversity of time, and place, and nationality. Since Christ is God, no other conclusion is possible.

Very many outside our Church are beginning to feel, rather than understand this. A cry is everywhere going up for a greater concentration of religious effort, for a closer union between the various denominations. May we not hope that the Angel of the Lord is "moving the waters," in answer to the prayer of our Lord that has not ceased, and never shall cease to echo through the mazes of Creation? As the multitude of sick and infirm stood by the pool of Bethsaida, patiently awaiting the motion of the waters in order to obtain a cure, so, too, innumerable souls, heart-weary of strife, and harassed by doubt and uncertainty, are anxiously looking for a movement of the religious bodies towards unity, as a remedy for their mental and spiritual ills. With that longing we fully sympathize, and earnestly pray that it may not be an aimless one. But there can be no union of the fragments, except by and through a union with the whole. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither

can you, unless you abide in me," (John xv, 4), is the warning our Saviour has given us against the specious argument that all forms are good. The branches must be in the vine; otherwise they shall wither; or, in other words, individual souls must abide in the unity of Christ's Church, if they wish to bring forth fruit. Creed as well as conduct is prescribed. Indeed, in no true sense can there be conduct without creed, just as there can be no science without principles. Wherever there is room for doubt, there unrest of mind inevitably exists; wherever there is no firm-fixed and unvarying creed there can be no union, no verification of Christ's prayer that all might be one, even as He and the Father were one. The only real basis then, of religious union, is unchanging truth, and the only safeguard of such truth is a divinely instituted organization, guaranteed against failure by the promise of a God—"And I say to thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. xvi, 18.)

Let us, Dearly Beloved, in imitation of the "wise men from the East," recognize and adore the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Even now, as in their day, we shall find the "Child with Mary, His mother." Through her we can learn to know more clearly who and what He is. Her Son—therefore truly man: the Son of God assuming of her human flesh by virtue of the most High, (Luke i, 35.) therefore truly God. The conversation between the mother and the Angel reveals this fact; and the mystery of the Incarnation, whilst still remaining incomprehensible, is shorn of all contradiction, and claims the assent of our intellect in virtue of the testimony thus afforded. How closely does this consoling doctrine bring our poor human nature into contact

with the Infinite ! Verily, no nation hath its gods so near to it as our God is to us.

Let us, also, prize beyond all the inestimable gift of true Faith, and thank our Saviour, that through the efficacy of His prayer we have been kept within the bond of that unity, which was to be the distinguishing mark of His disciples. Guard that Faith ; be proud of it ; profess it openly at all times ; instil its teachings into the minds and hearts of your children ; and so live that the light of your example may lead others to the truth. During the Lenten Season that is upon us, fall down, as did the " wise men," and devoutly adore your Saviour. With them offer Him " gold,"—that is, the service of your souls by a compliance with your religious obligations ; offer Him the " frankincense " of fervent prayer, both in your homes and at church ; offer Him " myrrh " by a mortification of your senses, especially in those things in which you may have given way to excess in the past. Let the time of Lent be a time of prayer, of serious reflection, and of salutary penance and reparation. Even apparently innocent public amusements should be avoided. You are to give the example, and to mark the lines, for the proper observance of Lent ; and you should not allow any social, or personal motive to induce you to have part in any festivity whatsoever. The silly may have their silly smile, and the shallow may indulge in their shallow arguments ; but the sensible man knows that the example of our Lord in retiring from the society of the world, to fast and pray for forty days and forty nights, and not the customs of the frivolous, should be our guide and rule of conduct.

Whilst praying for your own needs and those of your friends, do not forget the wants of the Church in this Diocese. Pray, also, that light may be given

to those seeking the truth and endeavouring to do God's will; and that the day may be hastened when the other sheep shall be brought in, "and there shall be made one fold and one shepherd." (John x, 16.)

The Grace of our Lord Jesus be with you,
Brethren.

This Pastoral shall be read in every Church of this Diocese on the first Sunday after its reception that the Pastor shall officiate therein.

✠ C. O'BRIEN,

Archbishop of Halifax.

E. F. MURPHY, D. D.

HALIFAX, Feb. 13th, 1895.